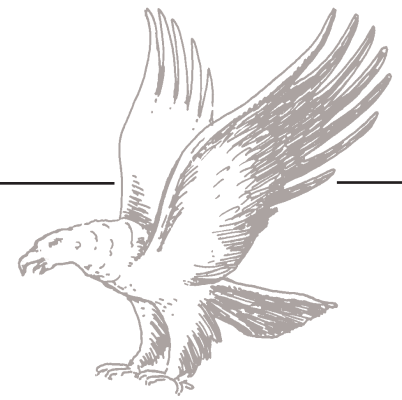


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



March 31, 2013

The Death of Death

The resurrection of Jesus is not a fairy tale. It is a historical reality with real-world implications, especially when confronting the prospect of our own death.

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15).

There are plenty of things in this world for us to be afraid of: crime, financial disasters, tornadoes, cancer, or our teenage daughters becoming Justin Bieber fans. But all of these fears pale compared to a single dread that haunts all humanity: *death*.

As a species, we are absolutely terrified of death. Given that death usually involves some degree of pain, that’s understandable. But the fear extends much deeper than mere physiology. The lack of any solid empirical evidence of what lies beyond death (“fear of the unknown”) scares us witless. And death is so total; it marks the end of *every* activity in this life: family and friends, jobs, hobbies, beautiful sunsets, pleasant evening walks—all gone. But the most fearsome aspect of death is its finality.

In any other circumstance we can tolerate separation, knowing that there is at least a chance we can be reunited with our earlier life. But with death, there will be no reunion. Our body will return to dust, and soon it will be as though we never existed.

This dread of death is so powerful, so pervasive, that it holds people in a kind of bondage. We are so terrified of death that we avoid talking about it. We don’t even like to use the word; we prefer to use euphemisms like “pass away” or “decease.” As a society we are spending trillions of dollars desperately trying to avoid death, but at best we are only forestalling the inevitable for a few years. No matter how hard we try to break free, the chains of death maintain a firm grip on our minds, and we remain prisoners of an awful fear.

If death and its hold on our psyche is so destructive of human happiness—and if there really is a God—why doesn’t He just eliminate it? We can’t know the reasons why God runs His universe the way He does, but we *can* know what He has done to address the problem.

Like everything else in this life, death is ultimately a test of our faith in God. He sent Jesus to this world to live as one of us, subject to all the hardships that we have to deal with — including death. In Jesus’ death, God was signalling to the human race, “I understand what you’re experiencing. I get it!” But that’s not all: in Jesus’ resurrection, God was demonstrating to us that, in fact, death is *not* final. Someday we will all be resurrected, just as Jesus was (Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Ironically, by facing death Himself, Jesus conquered that which once enslaved us. By experiencing death He brought about the death of death.

Of course, all of this is predicated on the assumption that we *believe* that Jesus really did die and rise again. That is why, for millions of people, nothing has changed; they don’t believe the whole Jesus story, so the fear of death still holds them in its tight grip. But for those of us who do believe, life will never be the same. Death for us is merely a way station on a journey toward a better home where there is no death.

– David King